
Meet S.A.R.A.H.: WHO's AI-Powered Health Advocate



In anticipation of World Health Day, themed 'My Health, My Right', the World Health Organization (WHO) reveals the introduction of its new digital health advocate named S.A.R.A.H. This prototype harnesses the capabilities of generative artificial intelligence (AI) to offer an enhanced empathetic interaction. S.A.R.A.H., which stands for Smart AI Resource Assistant for Health, signifies a significant advancement in AI-driven health information platforms.

Multilingual support and health insights advocate.

Utilizing state-of-the-art technology and innovative language models, S.A.R.A.H. can assist users around the clock in eight languages, covering a wide range of health-related subjects across various devices. The WHO's digital health advocate is adept at delivering insights on key health issues, from cultivating healthy lifestyles to addressing mental well-being. It serves as an additional resource to empower individuals to realize their right to health, irrespective of their location.

Educating on global health challenges

Also referred to as Sarah, S.A.R.A.H. aids users in comprehending risk factors associated with prevalent global causes of mortality such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory conditions, and diabetes. It offers guidance on topics like tobacco cessation, physical activity, nutritious eating, and stress management. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of WHO, remarked, "The future of healthcare lies in digital innovations, and enhancing countries' utilisation of digital technologies in healthcare is a key objective for WHO. S.A.R.A.H. demonstrates the potential of AI to revolutionise health information accessibility in an engaging manner. I urge the research community to assist us in further exploring the capabilities of this technology to address disparities and provide timely, trustworthy health information."

AI capabilities and ethical considerations

Unlike traditional algorithms or scripts, the current iteration of S.A.R.A.H. employs generative AI. This enables her to deliver more precise real-time responses, engage in expansive personalised interactions that mimic human dialogues, and offer compassionate feedback in a non-judgmental setting. The underlying technology is backed by Soul Machines Biological AI. While WHO advocates for the ongoing exploration of this innovative technology's advantages for public health, it underscores the importance of addressing ethical considerations. These encompass fair access, privacy safeguards, data accuracy, protection against bias, and overall safety.

WHO's Ethical Commitment and Future Development of S.A.R.A.H.

The WHO's commitment to ensuring high ethical standards and evidence-based content is evident through its continuous assessment and enhancement of the S.A.R.A.H. project. Stakeholders, including developers, policymakers, and healthcare professionals, must prioritize these ethical and human rights issues when designing and implementing AI solutions to ensure universal benefits. The ongoing development of the S.A.R.A.H. prototype aims to foster dependable, accountable, and accessible health information. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a precursor to S.A.R.A.H., named Florence, was utilized by WHO to distribute vital public health messages on the virus, vaccination, tobacco cessation, healthy nutrition, and physical fitness.

Furthermore, WHO remains committed to leveraging various digital platforms and tools, including social media, chatbots, and text messaging, to amplify the dissemination of health information.

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Published on : Thu, 4 Apr 2024